

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ATHENS 2834

EXDIS

DEPT PASS OTHER ADDRESSEES AS DESIRED

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR MARR GR US
SUBJECT: US-GREEK DEFENSE COOPERATION NEGOTIATIONS: DISCUSSION
WITH FOREIGN MINISTER BITSIOS

REF: ATHENS 2607

1. THE SECOND MAJOR TOPIC (BESIDES VIENNA/CYPRUS
NEGOTIATIONS - SEPTTEL) THAT I DISCUSSED WITH BITSIOS THIS
AFTERNOON WAS THE NEXT PHASE OF OUR BILATERAL DEFENSE
COOPERATION NEGOTIATIONS. BITSIOS SAID THAT CARAMANLIS
AND THE GOG OWED US A PROPOSAL ON THIS SUBJECT (REFTEL)
AND NOW THAT THE TURKISH MILITARY EXERCISES IN THE
AEGEAN HAD ENDED WITHOUT ANY UNTOWARD INCIDENT THE
GREEK SIDE WAS PREPARED TO PROCEED, ALTHOUGH THEY HAD
SOME PREFERENCES AS TO HOW THIS SHOULD BE DONE.

2. BITSIOS SAID THAT AS CARAMANLIS HAD INDICATED
TO ME LAST WEEK, THE GOG THOUGHT IT HIGHLY DESIRABLE
THAT WHEN WE RESUMED OUR BILATERAL CONTACTS AND NEGOTIA-
TIONS ON THIS SUBJECT THAT THEY BE AS LOW KEY AND
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AS LITTLE SUBJECT TO SENSATIONALIZING AND EXPLOITING
IN GREECE AS POSSIBLE. THE GOG THEREFORE PROPOSED
THAT WE PROCEED IN A WAY THAT WOULD ALLOW THEM TO
CHARACTERIZE THE NEGOTIATING DISCUSSIONS AS BEING
BASICALLY "DIPLOMATIC CONTACTS" OR "CONTINUING TALKS
THROUGH DIPLOMATIC CHANNELS IN ATHENS." THEN,
DEPENDING UPON HOW MUCH AND HOW FAST PROGRESS WAS MADE,

ANY FULL NEGOTIATING TEAM REQUIRED COULD COME TO ATHENS WHEN IT WAS CLEAR THAT FINAL AGREEMENT ON ALL THE DOCUMENTATION COULD BE REACHED. I EXPLAINED TO BITSIOS THAT WE DID NOT HAVE THE LEGAL AND TECHNICAL EXPERTISE IN OUR EMBASSY HERE TO DEAL WITH ALL THE REMAINING OUTSTANDING QUESTIONS AND WOULD THEREFORE NEED TO BE SUPPLEMENTED AND ASSISTED BY SEVERAL LEGAL AND TECHNICAL-LEVEL EXPERTS FROM WASHINGTON. BITSIOS SAID HE THOUGHT IF WE COULD GET BY WITH "ONE OR TWO -- OR, IF ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY, THREE" SUCH EXPERTS, HE THOUGHT IT WOULD PROBABLY WORK OUT ALL RIGHT. I TOLD HIM I WOULD CONVEY THIS TO WASHINGTON. BITSIOS SAID HE ENVISAGED NO ANNOUNCEMENT OR PUBLICITY WHATSOEVER IF SUCH EXPERTS CAME TO ATHENS AND WOULD HANDLE ANY PRESS INQUIRIES HERE ALONG THE LINES INDICATED ABOVE.

3. BITSIOS SAID THAT CHRYSOPATHIS AND MACHERITSAS WOULD BE AVAILABLE FOR THESE DISCUSSIONS AND NEGOTIATIONS ON THE GREEK SIDE AND THAT HE AND TZOUNIS "WOULD BE AVAILABLE BEHIND THE SCENES AND ALL AROUND THE TALKS." FROM OUR DISCUSSION IT BECAME CLEAR THAT HE SAW DWORKEN PLUS ONE OR TWO OTHERS FROM WASHINGTON REPRESENTING THE US SIDE, WITH DCM MILLS AND ME SUPERVISING AND ASSISTING THE WAY HE AND TZOUNIS WOULD BE DOING.

4. BITSIOS SAID THAT THERE SEEMED TO BE TWO GROUPS OF ISSUES REMAINING, ONE FINANCIAL AND ONE TECHNICAL.
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ON THE FINANCIAL SIDE HE SAID THE GOG UNDERSTANDING WAS THAT THE FOUR YEAR PROGRAM OF MILITARY ASSISTANCE AMOUNTED TO SEVEN HUNDRED MILLION DOLLARS OF WHICH ONE HUNDRED AND NINETY-FIVE REPEAT ONE HUNDRED AND NINETY-FIVE MILLION WOULD BE AVAILABLE DURING THE FIRST YEAR AND THAT THE REMAINING FIVE HUNDRED AND FIVE MILLION WOULD BE ALLOCATED DURING THE SUBSEQUENT THREE YEARS. I SAID THAT SUCH A BREAKDOWN WAS NEWS TO ME AND OBVIOUSLY WOULD BE BEYOND THE COMPETENCE OF VISITING "EXPERTS" FROM WASHINGTON TO NEGOTIATE, AND THAT I WOULD HAVE TO CONSULT WASHINGTON ABOUT IT.

(COMMENT: THIS LITTLE EXCHANGE, I BELIEVE, PAVES THE WAY FOR DEFERRING BILATERAL DISCUSSIONS OF FINANCIAL QUESTIONS AT THE OUTSET OF OUR TALKS HERE IN ATHENS, ASSUMING WASHINGTON WISHES TO GO AHEAD WITH THE NON-FINANCIAL ISSUES AT THIS TIME.)

5. AS TO THE SECOND CATEGORY -- OR "TECHNICAL

ISSUES" -- BITSIOS SAID HE HAD BEEN INSTRUCTED BY CARAMANLIS TO REMIND US IN THESE NEGOTIATIONS THAT GREECE WAS THE HOST AND US FORCES IN THIS COUNTRY WERE, IN A SENSE, "GUESTS". BITSIOS SAID THERE WAS VERY LITTLE ADDITIONAL "GIVE" IN THE GREEK POSITION ON ANY OF THE REMAINING TECHNICAL QUESTIONS. I SAID I WAS DISAPPOINTED TO HEAR THIS AND WHILE WE OBVIOUSLY ACCEPTED FULLY THAT THIS COUNTRY WAS GOVERNED BY THE GOG I THOUGHT THE ROLE OF US FORCES IN GREECE COULD NOT BE CORRECTLY DESCRIBED AS THAT OF "GUESTS". MOREOVER, I SAID, THAT DURING MY RECENT CONSULTATION IN WASHINGTON I GAINED THE IMPRESSION THAT WHILE THE USG WAS PREPARED TO BE AS RESPONSIVE AS POSSIBLE TO GREEK REQUIREMENTS IN THESE NEGOTIATIONS, THERE WAS ALSO VERY LITTLE WE COULD DO ON SOME OF THESE TECHNICAL QUESTIONS AND STILL HAVE THE MILITARY FACILITIES WE WERE USING IN THIS

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COUNTRY BE FULLY SATISFACTORY FROM OUR POINT OF VIEW AND WORTH THE COST THEY ENTAILED. BITSIOS THEN SAID THE GOG WAS PREPARED TO MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO TRY AND REACH AGREEMENT WITH US AND I SAID WE WERE AS WELL.

6. BITSIOS SAID THAT IF THE PROPOSED ARRANGEMENTS WERE ACCEPTABLE TO WASHINGTON THE GOG WOULD BE READY TO COMMENCE THESE CONTACTS AND DISCUSSIONS VERY SOON. IN AN EFFORT TO PIN DOWN A DATE, AND BECAUSE OF THE LONG GREEK EASTER HOLIDAY WEEKEND NEXT WEEK (THROUGH MONDAY, APRIL 11), HE ASKED ME TO PROPOSE TO WASHINGTON THE COMMENCEMENT OF THESE TALKS IN ATHENS ON WEDNESDAY MORNING, APRIL 13. I SAID I WOULD DO SO AND WOULD BE BACK IN TOUCH WITH HIM AS SOON AS I HEARD BACK FROM WASHINGTON.

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